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Chairman: Mr. Ali ..... (Malaysia)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Ms. McLurg

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 142: Financing of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (A/62/642, A/62/750 and A/62/781/Add.13)

1. **Ms. Simkić** (Slovenia), speaking on a point of order on behalf of the European Union, recalled the principle stated by her delegation at the Committee's previous meeting that it was prepared to accept the submission of Advisory Committee reports without prior translation into all of the Organization's official languages only as an exceptional measure which should not be considered a precedent.

2. However, it appeared that the situation was being repeated with the Advisory Committee report on the financing of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI). While her delegation had no wish to delay introduction of the budgets of peacekeeping operations, it regarded the current circumstances as unacceptable and wished to know why, having received an advance copy in English of the report in question on Thursday of the previous week, the Committee still had no access to versions in the remaining official languages.

3. **The Chairman** said that the secretariat of the Committee had taken note of the concerns expressed.

4. **Mr. Sach** (Controller), introducing the performance report on the budget of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) for the period from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007 (A/62/642), said that the General Assembly, in its resolutions 60/17 B and 61/247, had appropriated funding of $472,889,300, and that expenditure had been $450,769,600, leaving an unencumbered balance of $22,119,700, representing an implementation rate of 95.3 per cent.

5. The main causes of the variance were lower expenditure on facilities and infrastructure, primarily because of reduced requirements for utilities, maintenance services and aviation fuel storage and distribution equipment, and lower expenditure on air transportation, mainly because of lower than projected flying hours for helicopters. The General Assembly was invited to decide how to treat the unencumbered balance of $22,119,700, as well as other income and adjustments amounting to $16,565,800.

6. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the budget for the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire for the period from 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009 (A/62/750), which represented a proposed total of $477,058,000, he said that the sum concerned was $6,201,900, or 1.3 per cent, higher than the resources approved for 2007/08 by the General Assembly in its resolution 61/247 B.

7. The main causes of the variance were higher air transportation requirements arising mainly from the rotation of military contingents and formed police personnel using chartered aircraft, and higher communications requirements arising from public information services, including outreach campaigns, media monitoring and development, and radio programming to support the upcoming elections; disarmament, demobilization, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration, and the identification process. The General Assembly was invited to appropriate $477,058,000 to maintain the Operation from 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009; to assess the amount of $38,472,419 for the period from 1 to 31 July 2008; and to assess the amount of $438,585,581 at a monthly rate of $39,754,833, should the Security Council decide to continue the Operation's mandate.

8. **Ms. McLurg** (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on the financial performance report for the period from 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007 and proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2008 to 30 June 2009 of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, indicated that, exceptionally, the report in question was being made available as an advance, unedited, copy in English only.*

9. The Advisory Committee was recommending that the General Assembly approve the proposed budget, with some minor reductions, and recalled that the resource requirements it contained took account of Security Council resolution 1765 (2007), which made UNOCI responsible for supporting the implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement and the elections planned for November 2008. The Advisory Committee welcomed the efficiency gains made by reducing reliance on commercial air carriers for the rotation of United Nations military and police contingents, and encouraged UNOCI to continue its efforts in that regard.

* Subsequently issued as document A/62/781/Add.13.

10. In the interests of developing national capacity, the Advisory Committee recommended that the two P-3 and one Field Service post requested for the Operation's Communication and Public Information Office and the one P-3 and one Field Service post requested for the Engineering Section should instead be filled by national staff. There was room for more use of national personnel in a number of areas.

11. Having noted that the chief of the UNOCI Human Rights Section was also the representative in Côte d'Ivoire of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Advisory Committee was requesting the Secretary-General to clarify the respective responsibilities of UNOCI and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and to make proposals in that connection in the UNOCI budget for 2009/10.

12. **Mr. Debabeche** (Algeria), speaking on behalf of the African Group, reiterated the Group's long-held view that all peacekeeping missions should be provided with sufficient funding to fulfil their mandates. Achieving peace and security in Côte d'Ivoire was an integral part of pursuing stability and development in West Africa.

13. The Group noted that the proposed UNOCI budget for 2008/09 (A/62/750) provided for adjustments in structure and human resources in order to establish a link with the Ouagadougou Political Agreement, and that the adjustments included the conversion of international posts to national posts. The latter measure, which provided an opportunity to build national capacity, should be extended to all other peacekeeping missions. The renewal of 40 quick-impact projects was positive, as such projects increased the peace dividend in Côte d'Ivoire.

14. In accordance with the mandate conferred on it by the Security Council in resolution 1795 (2008), UNOCI had a central role in helping to build the political and security conditions needed for elections to take place. The Group welcomed the steps outlined in the Secretary-General's most recent progress report on UNOCI (S/2008/250) to identify eligible voters and reconstitute civil registers lost or destroyed during the conflict.

15. Concerned at the high projected vacancy rates for UNOCI, and believing that the actual rates might well be higher, the Group recalled that the General Assembly, in its resolution 61/276, had requested the Secretary-General to ensure that vacant posts were filled expeditiously. It wished to know what steps the Secretariat had taken to fill existing and new vacancies.

16. The very late issuance of the Advisory Committee report on the financing of UNOCI, as well as its reports on other equally important peacekeeping matters, was unacceptable. The Group hoped that the situation would not recur when the next budget for the Operation was submitted.

17. **Mr. Coffi** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that his delegation was grateful to the Organization for its dedication to, and unfailing support for, the implementation of the Ouagadougou Political Agreement, enabling a concentration of efforts on conducting free and transparent presidential elections in November 2008, in order to bring closure to the crisis which had begun in September 2002.

18. The outlook for the Agreement was positive, with the United Nations having lowered its security phase, the cantonment of Forces nouvelles members proceeding, militia forces being dismantled, relations with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund being restored and the country's debt to those institutions being repaid. In pursuit of sustainable development, the Government of Côte d'Ivoire had submitted an official request in April 2008 to the President of the Security Council and to the Secretary-General for the country to be placed on the agenda of the Peacebuilding Commission. Subsequent visits to Côte d'Ivoire by the Secretary-General and representatives of the Security Council, and a forthcoming visit by the 130 States members of the Group of 77 and China as part of the High-Level Conference on South-South Cooperation, were signs that the Government's objectives enjoyed support.

19. The Government of Côte d'Ivoire wished to emphasize that it had reached a transitional point between peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, seeking to eradicate once and for all the root causes of the conflict that had erupted in September 2002. It hoped that the Committee would take account of the resulting need for flexibility regarding the financing of UNOCI for 2006/07 and 2008/09. Echoing the recommendations of the Advisory Committee, it also hoped that more international posts would be converted to national posts where feasible, in order to build local

capacity and contribute to the ideals of the United Nations.

20. Lastly, his delegation agreed with other delegations that had already raised the disquieting issue of very late submission of documents, including the report of the Advisory Committee on the financing of UNOCI. It would like the Secretariat to explain why it had taken so long to produce, translate and distribute that report in the six official languages, despite the original being available since the end of the previous week, thus making the work of the Fifth Committee more difficult. It hoped that the Fifth Committee's suggestion of establishing a twelve-month programme of work for the Advisory Committee would help to prevent a recurrence of the situation. Such action should perhaps also be taken for all parts of the Secretariat involved in the documentation chain, in order to ensure on-time delivery of the reports needed for efficient administrative oversight by the Fifth Committee.

21. **Mr. Afifi** (Egypt) said that the progress made in the recent weekend informal consultations had enabled decisions to be reached on the financing of all peacekeeping operations whose proposed budgets had been introduced before the Committee, with the sole exception of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). A minor and extraneous issue had halted the Committee's efforts, as some delegations maintained that approval of financing for a mission as large as MONUC must await the approval of another resolution which, unlike those concerning peacekeeping operations, was not time-bound. His delegation was concerned at the tendency to create such links, and feared that the same situation might arise in connection with UNOCI.

22. **Mr. Sena** (Brazil) said that, while it did not wish to hamper progress in establishing financing for UNOCI, his delegation agreed with others that it was unacceptable to continue the practice of considering reports which had not first been translated into all of the Organization's official languages. It also took the view that the financing of MONUC should be accorded priority and concluded by the end of the day, with no link to any other pending resolution. Every proposal should be judged on its own merits.

23. **Mr. Debabeche** (Algeria) said that filibustering in the discussion of financing for MONUC was not giving the appropriate impression of commitment, engagement and good faith. His delegation trusted that the Committee would show the requisite flexibility, and the Bureau the requisite leadership, to find a solution.

24. **Mr. Tawana** (South Africa) said that the late issuance of documents regarding UNOCI, and indeed other peacekeeping operations, was an abiding concern. As the forthcoming elections in Côte d'Ivoire were a milestone, his delegation fully supported the provision of the resources requested for peacekeeping activities there.

25. With regard to MONUC, his delegation regretted that, for political reasons, intensive weekend discussions had left the issue of that mission's financing unresolved. Believing that the matter should be given priority, and should not be linked to unrelated issues, his delegation would like to know if the Committee was scheduled to return to the issue without delay.

26. **Mr. Diab** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation, having consistently called for the submission of all reports in the Organization's six official languages, was deeply concerned that the report of the Advisory Committee on the financing of UNOCI had been made available in only one of them. It had shown flexibility in the current instance, recognizing that the Committee was short of time.

27. Commending the Committee for its achievement in agreeing on draft resolutions for a large number of peacekeeping operations over the weekend, his delegation regretted that the financing of MONUC remained outstanding because, at a late hour, certain delegations had for some reason become unwilling to exercise the required flexibility. As the Committee had little time left, but much outstanding business to conclude, he hoped that the delegations concerned would enable progress on MONUC to be made rapidly.

28. **Ms. Simkić** (Slovenia), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that her delegation looked forward to receiving an explanation for the failure to issue reports of the Advisory Committee in all official languages. Even if, as a demonstration of flexibility, the European Union were to consent to the presentation of further Advisory Committee reports in their original language only, it wished to request the Chairman of the Advisory Committee to read the recommendations contained in those reports aloud at the appropriate meetings of the Committee so that they might be interpreted into all the other official languages.

29. The Committee had achieved a great deal during its recent weekend discussions, thanks to the cooperative and constructive spirit shown by all delegations. However, the European Union had raised some serious issues to which it attached great significance. It wished therefore to call for continued flexibility and compromise to address those issues.

30. **Mr. Abelian** (Secretary of the Committee) said that the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management had been informed of the language-related concern expressed by a number of delegations, including that of Slovenia, speaking on behalf of the European Union, regarding the report of the Advisory Committee on the financing of UNOCI. At the Committee's next meeting, he hoped to provide a response encompassing not only the role of the Department, but also that of the Committee and its Bureau, with chronological details and an account of the decisions taken.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.